

# NAVSEA NUWC Keyport Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Overseas EIS

## Frequently Asked Questions

Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC), Keyport has a unique mission in military readiness. We participate in research and development and conduct test and evaluation of undersea weapons and systems. Our mission requires extending our traditional undersea range areas for test and evaluation activities to accommodate advances in technology. This will enable us to provide the best weapons and systems to our Sailors, Marines and First Responders - their safety and their mission success depend on it.

Following are answers to frequently asked questions about the proposed extension of NUWC Keyport range activity areas:

### 1. Under the preferred alternative, how big would the ranges be if they are extended?

The Navy's preferred alternative for each range site would result in the following changes:

Keyport Range Site: Currently 1.5 square nautical miles (nm), Alternative 1 would extend range boundaries to the north, east and south, increasing the size of the range to 3.2 square nm.

Dabob Bay Range Complex (DBRC) Site: Currently 32.7 square nm, Alternative 2 would extend the southern boundary approximately 10 nm (11.3 square nm) and extend the northern boundary 1 nm south of Hood Canal Bridge (1.7 square nm). This would increase the size to approximately 45.7 square nm and affords a straight run of 27.5 nm for unmanned undersea vehicles.

Quinault Underwater Tracking Range (QUTR) Site: Currently 48.3 square nm, Alternative 2 would enlarge range boundaries to coincide with the overlying military airspace of W-237A and would extend shoreward to include a one-mile section of the Pacific Beach shoreline. The total range area would encompass 1,839.8 square nm

### 2. Will the ranges be used more days if they are extended?

At the Keyport Range site, the days of use would increase from its current 55 days to a total of 60 days per year; Current use of the Dabob Bay Range Complex site averages 200 days a year, and there would be no increase from this baseline. At the Quinault Underwater Tracking Range site, average use of offshore areas would increase from its current 14 days to 16 days per year, and activities in the selected surf zone would occur on average 30 days per year.

### 3. Will public access be restricted?

Access will remain open. Boaters will only be re-directed when there is a safety issue, a proximity issue, or during sound recordings when we need quiet on the range.

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Boaters, fishermen (including shrimpers and crabbers), divers and other users should notice little or no change on these waterways. If access to a specific area of a range is required during test activities, our range operators will direct boaters around the immediate test area. Should your vessel movement be restricted for safety reasons, it would be rare and for short periods of time (30 minutes or less), and the areas of restriction would be small; not range wide. Similarly, foot or vehicle traffic along a small area of the shore may be temporarily directed around an activity until it is completed, but only as necessary to ensure public safety.

## **4. How does the Navy communicate to the public what is happening on the ranges?**

The Navy communicates with the public in the following ways:

- a. NUWC Keyport provides informational posters to marinas, ports and small shops around the Dabob Bay Range Complex site. A copy of this poster is available on our web site for reference.
- b. Red and amber beacon lights are located on points around the Dabob Bay portion of the Dabob Bay Range Complex. These lights are turned on during NUWC Keyport's testing activities.
- c. "Notice to Mariners" are posted in cooperation with the Coast Guard when warranted.

## **5. Is Keyport the only Navy user of the NUWC Keyport Range Complex?**

No, several Navy commands operate vessels of all sizes in these waters. While Navy vessels may be encountered in many of the current range areas and areas of proposed extension, the NAVSEA NUWC Keyport Range Complex Extension EIS/OEIS only applies to activities conducted under the management of NUWC Keyport. The point of contact for the other Navy activities in the area is Commander Navy Region Northwest Public Affairs Office (<https://www.cnrc.navy.mil/cnrnw/Newsroom/index.htm>).

## **6. What is the impact of Keyport activities on marine mammals in the area?**

Keyport complies with the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which prohibits the harm or harassment of any marine mammal unless specifically authorized by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Keyport also complies with the Endangered Species Act, which requires additional protection for threatened and endangered marine mammals, such as the Southern Resident Killer Whale. Based on the analyses conducted for the range extensions, the only likely effects of Keyport activities on marine mammals would involve the most common species (such as harbor seals, sea lions, and harbor porpoises) and be limited to non-injury, short-term behavioral reactions to sound in the water. Keyport's activities are conducted in a manner to ensure safety for the marine mammals as well as the public and our range personnel. If a marine mammal is within a range exclusion zone, active acoustics are either halted or delayed.

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## **7. How are Keyport personnel trained to avoid impact to marine mammals?**

NUWC Keyport range operators are trained by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), scientists to spot and identify marine mammals. If a marine mammal is within a range exclusion zone, active acoustics are either halted or delayed. The unique geography of the Keyport and Hood Canal range areas allow for shore-to-shore surveillance of marine mammals.

## **8. Will Keyport activities have a negative effect on fish, invertebrates, or critical and essential fish habitat?**

No. Keyport activities involve temporary if any effects on very small areas at any given time. The results of the analysis indicate that there would be no significant, adverse impacts to fish populations or habitats as a result of NUWC Keyport activities. Furthermore, there would be no adverse effects to fish listed under the Endangered Species Act (including salmon) from active acoustic sources from NAVSEA NUWC Keyport Range Complex activities.

## **9. Will there be an economic impact on the communities located near the proposed extensions of the Keyport Range Complex sites?**

It is not anticipated that there will be any negative economic impact to communities located near the proposed extension areas. The economic analysis includes fishing, recreational use and diving activities.

## **10. What is an unmanned undersea vehicle (UUV)?**

According to the executive summary in the U. S. Navy's UUV Master Plan, "An unmanned undersea vehicle is defined as a self-propelled submersible whose operation is either fully autonomous (pre-programmed or real-time adaptive mission control) or under minimal supervisory control and is un-tethered except for data links such as a fiber optic cable."

## **11. What opportunities for public involvement have occurred?**

Public involvement opportunities were provided in preparation for the drafting of the EIS/OEIS, to take comments on the Draft EIS/OEIS, and to take comments on the final EIS/OEIS:

- a. Public Scoping meetings occurred in November 2003 in Kitsap, Mason, Jefferson, and Grays Harbor counties. Comments were taken in writing, verbally, and electronically for 30 days on concerns and suggestions regarding development of alternatives for extension of the existing ranges.

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- b. The draft EIS/OEIS was released in September 2008. Public Hearings were held in Kitsap, Mason, Jefferson, and Grays Harbor counties. In addition to comments taken during the public hearings, comments were accepted for a 45 day period in writing and electronically.
- c. The final EIS/OEIS was released on May 21, 2010. Written comments were taken during a 30-day wait period which ended June 21, 2010.

Appendix A contains documentation of public involvement for the scoping meetings in 2003 and hearings in 2008.

Appendix G contains documentation of the public comments and responses for public comments received during the Draft EIS Comment Period.

## **12. How many comments were received on the draft EIS/OEIS, and what were some of the concerns?**

Approximately 240 verbal and written comments were received on the draft EIS/OEIS from the public, Native American Tribes, and regulators. The main concerns expressed involved access through test areas, safety of marine mammals, and protection of habitat. In addition to comments noted in Appendix A, comments and responses are provided in Appendices G and H.

## **13. How many comments were received on the final EIS/OEIS and what were some of the concerns?**

Comments were received from the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and one public citizen. The U. S. EPA submitted favorable comments regarding incorporation of additional natural resources information to the final EIS/OEIS. The public commenter expressed support for the Navy's proposal to extend the ranges.

## **14. When will the decision be made to implement the proposed action to extend the ranges?**

The Secretary of the Navy will issue a Record of Decision (ROD) after carefully weighing all alternatives and comments received on the Draft EIS/OEIS and Final EIS/OEIS. The Navy anticipates a ROD for the NAVSEA NUWC Keyport Range Complex in Fall 2011.

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